



## Violence Free Crisis Line / The Abbie

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## Testimony on HB 230

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Janet Cahill and I am the Director of Violence Free Crisis Line in Kalispell. We are an organization that serves anyone in crisis but primarily victims of interpersonal violent crime. The organization has been in service to Flathead County for 35 years.

I am greatly concerned about HB230, the bill that would move the Board of Crime Control from the Department of Justice to the Department of Corrections. While I am aware that reducing state spending is a priority for all of you, this is not a good way to do it. In fact this will be very harmful for programs like mine and the people we serve. The time that it will take to de-obligate funds with the federal government and then re-obligate is estimated to be between 2 months and one year. That means that organizations like mine will go without these funds for one year. The impact on my organization of this loss, which could be as high as \$58,000, 23% of our budget, will be devastating. These funds provide our entire communication system; our crisis phone line, the answering service, and cell phones for the staff to respond to the crisis line. Also we would have to eliminate one full time staff person who works in the shelter and answers the crisis line Monday – Friday in the evening. With only 3 full time staff and three part time, this will impair our efficiency and over task the other staff. We do not have enough funds or volunteers to cover a loss of this magnitude. It would cripple our organization. Well, you may say, it is necessary for the health of the state. Think of the people that will be affected by this loss. We serve more than 1400 people each year, some of whom are in highly lethal situations. Without our crisis line and shelter, women risk death. We have had 10 domestic violence

related homicides in Flathead County since the year 2000. Potentially this number could skyrocket.

Please do not support HB 230.

The Board of Crime Control is a very well run, efficient, free standing organization that provides funds to many agencies that provide services to victims of crime. The system of application for funds and the distribution is very smooth. It is ludicrous to try to move it, which will result in chaos for some time, followed by inefficiency for another longer period before reaching stabilization. I have witnessed this first hand when another agency from which I received funds was moved twice. It was moved into another department only to be moved back several years later. It would only hurt those of us who are trying to assist the people of Montana who are experiencing harm.

I encourage you to look elsewhere for savings and not try to balance the budgets on the back of the people who elected you. Thank you for your time.

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